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COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
HIGHWAYS, TRANSIT AND PIPELINES

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PROJECTION FORCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TOTAL FORCES

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0510**

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The Honorable Duncan Hunter  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
2120 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hunter,

We are writing to share our deep concern that our committee has not conducted sufficient oversight of our military operations in Iraq at a time when the challenges before us there - the dangers facing our troops and, sadly, deaths and injuries to our men and women in uniform - keep rising.

It is unacceptable that this committee has been negligent for nearly two years and it is high time that it begin paying close attention to:

- 1) The conduct of the war and the impact of our operations on the insurgency. While the administration and the Pentagon paint optimistic scenarios regarding Iraq's future, a recent cable from the outgoing CIA station chief in Baghdad warns that Iraq risks descending deeper into violent chaos. A sustained and independent look by the Armed Services Committee is necessary to sort through contrasting reports and provide this committee and the rest of the Congress with a realistic appraisal of the tactical and strategic situation on the ground. Beyond Iraq, there is growing evidence of instability and danger to U.S. interests throughout the region from Al Qaeda activity in Iraq, terrorist havens in Syria, and growing nuclear ambitions in Iran that demand Congressional attention.
- 2) The full impact of the Pentagon's lack of planning for stabilizing post-war Iraq. Many of the problems our troops are facing today stem from the Pentagon's miscalculations before the war: equipment shortages, back to back deployments, a persistent insurgency, surging fatalities and injuries are directly related to the poor war planning and a shameful inability at the highest levels, as most recently demonstrated by the Secretary of Defense this week, to recognize these mistakes.
- 3) The Army and Marine Corps have dipped heavily into the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division's 3<sup>rd</sup> Combat Brigade Combat Team from Fort Riley, Kansas, is racing to cover equipment is not only dangerous, but it affects the readiness of troops who may not be able to train properly before being deployed. The committee needs to know how prevalent this problem is and what is being done to address it.
- 4) An accurate assessment of equipment shortages in Iraq. In September, in a survey of active duty military and their families, the Annenberg Public Policy Center reported widespread lack of preparedness within the Guard and Reserve. Forty-two percent of all

respondents said that Guard and Reservists were sent to Iraq without proper training and equipment. Yesterday Lt. Gen. Steven Whitcomb stated that he would make sure that all American military vehicles driven into Iraq in the future would contain at least minimal armor plating. While this is welcome news, it is a glaring failure by the Pentagon that this commitment to protect our troops in harm's way comes over a year after the beginning of war in Iraq. While it has provided funds for additional protective gear for the troops, this committee has failed to hold leadership at the Pentagon accountable for inadequately protecting our troops from the start. In addition to the incredible stories from our troops at a news briefing this Wednesday having to survive with only scraps to armor their vehicles, your staff released a report that shows that only 10 percent of the 4,814 medium-weight transport trucks have armor and only 15 percent of the 4,314 heavy transport vehicles. We were particularly alarmed to hear that Armor Holdings, the sole producer of up-Armored humvees, has the capacity to produce 50 to 100 additional vehicles per month; yet the Defense Department has failed to place any new orders.

5) Beyond up-armorizing humvees and providing body armor to the troops, this committee needs to get better information on the Pentagon's plans to replace vehicles, weapons systems and equipment used by our troops in Iraq that are getting worn at a faster rate than anticipated.

6) The Army and Marine Corps have dipped heavily into the Preposition War Stocks to cover equipment loss. The committee needs to closely monitor DoD's plans to reset these stocks and how it intend to pay for this reset. Diminished war stocks are a serious cause for concern and directly affect U.S. ability to prosecute another war.

7) The impact of the Pentagon's insufficient force size for operations in Iraq. Despite lessons learned from previous operations and recommendations from the previous Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of Defense has consistently rejected Congressional proposals to increase the size of the armed forces and continues to do so. Not until a hearing on November 17<sup>th</sup> did the head of the Marine Corps, General Michael Hagee publicly acknowledge that the increase in manpower provided in the FY2005 Defense Authorization bill would help "man infantry battalions at 100 percent" and address "internal shortfalls." The Panel led by former Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger found that insufficient force levels may have had a contributing impact on the abuse at Abu Ghraib. More alarmingly, it is vital that this committee understand if our military is currently able to fight another major war with a peer competitor.

8) The impact of the Secretary of Defense's stop-loss policies on recruitment and retention. While the Secretary constantly downplays this effort to maintain sufficient forces in theater, it is clear that this policy is having a damaging effect on the families of deployed troops, on the United States' ability to protect the homeland with adequate domestic first responders, and on the economy. It is clear that that the Pentagon can only break its promise to our Armed Forces so many times before we have trouble sustaining an all-volunteer military force.

9) The significant reliance of the Pentagon on Guard and Reserve for operation in Iraq. The committee needs to take a careful look at the changes that the Pentagon is contemplating to rebalance the force and if they will be useful not simply for operations in Iraq but also appropriate for future conflicts.

10) The fiscal impact of funding the war in Iraq through supplementals rather than properly budgeting for them in the defense bill. The ballooning costs of the war in Iraq and the Secretary of Defense's reluctance to contemplate any trade-offs in the defense bill is irresponsible and means that we may be funding a number of programs that have less utility for the types of threats we are facing in the near term.

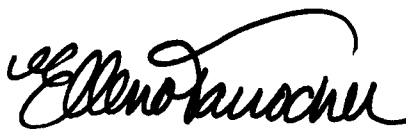
11) The administration's failure to build a true coalition of the capable to share the economic and human costs of the war in Iraq. This week, our NATO allies expressed their reluctance to engage in a broader effort to train Iraqi security forces who are desperately needed to provide security for the elections. The United Nations still has not helped with either security or other vital postwar assistance. While both bodies share the blame for not recognizing the need to succeed in Iraq, it is ultimately the administration's failure to engage them diplomatically that has put us in such a dire predicament.

In addition to these specific areas that need to be focused on, the committee needs to become serious about engaging in meaningful oversight.


Instead of rare hearings and closed briefings with officials who are unable or unwilling to provide information, this committee needs to hear from troops in the field to get unvarnished assessments. We believe that true oversight requires more than simply asking the Department of Defense or the Service Chiefs if they have any problems. We would like to see the committee and committee staff do more direct investigative work to explore problems and develop solutions that help meet the needs of our troops in the field. Specifically, we believe that field hearings, private meetings with troops where they are free to share their views, and investigative work by committee staff would all help the Armed Services Committee do a better job of overseeing the DoD. It is also urgent that you restore the Oversight and Investigations subcommittee to provide the Armed Services Committee with a permanent body to provide sustained attention to various issues.

We appreciate your attention to these important matters and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

  
Ellen O. Tauscher

  
Marty Meehan

  
Kendrick Meek